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House of Representatives

The House met at 12:30 p.m. and was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. COLE).

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following communication from the Speaker:

WASHINGTON, DC,
September 13, 2004.

I hereby appoint the Honorable TOM COLE to act as Speaker pro tempore on this day.

J. DENNIS HASTERT,
Speaker of the House of Representatives.

MORNING HOUR DEBATES

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 20, 2004, the Chair will now recognize Members from lists submitted by the majority and minority leaders for morning hour debates. The Chair will alternate recognition between the parties, with each party limited to not to exceed 30 minutes, and each Member, except the majority leader, the minority leader, or the minority whip, limited to not to exceed 5 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. PALLONE) for 5 minutes.

MISSION ACCOMPLISHED FOR REPUBLICANS AND THEIR SPECIAL INTERESTS

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, over the past couple of weeks, President Bush has attempted to turn attention away from his dismal domestic record by scaring Americans into believing his administration is the only administration that can keep them safe and by proposing a litany of new domestic programs without any specifics on what they entail and how he would pay for them.

The President hopes Americans forgot 9/11 happened on his watch, that he

and his administration refused to listen to his own terrorism expert, Richard Clarke, who warned that the possibility of a terrorist attack needed to be taken seriously. President Bush also hopes Americans forgot that it took him several months to back the Department of Homeland Security, time that could have been better used securing our ports and borders. And now, after more than a month of saying he would not support giving complete budgetary authority to a newly created intelligence director, the President is now moving closer to that 9/11 Commission recommendation. But closer is not good enough. Time is of the essence and the President continues to sidestep these critical homeland security issues. His latest proposal only gives the new director control over 70 percent of our Nation's intelligence budget.

Of course, the Republican leadership here in Congress ignores the urgent need to act on the 9/11 Commission recommendations. Last week, Majority Leader TOM DELAY told reporters that he thought it was, and I quote, highly inappropriate to call for immediate passage of the 9/11 Commission recommendations. I guess the majority leader would prefer we continue to delay. It has been 3 years. How much longer would the majority leader like us to wait?

Mr. Speaker, Republicans also would like the American people to forget that they have been doing the work of America's corporate and special interests for the last 4 years to the detriment of the best interests of the middle class.

Senator KERRY and congressional Democrats will take our country in a new direction and put the middle class first. Despite what President Bush and congressional Republicans promise over the next few months, they will continue to put the narrow interests of the few ahead of the middle class. Let us just look at their record over the

last 4 years. Republicans have accomplished many of the goals corporate interests have set forth with no concern over how these goals impact middle class Americans.

The Republican mission has been accomplished for companies seeking tax breaks for shipping jobs overseas, but not for workers. We have lost more than one million jobs. This administration still says outsourcing American jobs is a good thing, and they still insist on giving companies tax breaks that ship American jobs overseas. But profits are record high at Halliburton. If only Bush and congressional Republicans fought half as hard for the middle class as they have for Halliburton's no-bid contracts, maybe middle class families would not be hurting so badly.

The Republican mission has been accomplished for drug companies but not for our seniors. Seniors are still splitting their pills in half because prescription drug prices have soared so high. The Republican mission has been accomplished for insurance companies but not for families struggling with high health care costs. While premiums skyrocket, insurance companies continue to rake in record profits.

The Republican mission has been accomplished for big oil companies, not for middle class families struggling with the record high cost of gas. Average families are paying \$580 more in gas prices while oil profits rise and the Saudi royal family profits. Bush has made America more dependent on foreign oil and failed to invest in alternative technologies and conservation.

Mr. Speaker, in looking at this record, why should Americans believe President Bush and congressional Republicans would change their emphasis away from the special interests to the middle class in the future? Republican policies have squeezed middle class families. While earnings for middle class families have fallen over the last 4 years, health care costs have increased by more than \$2,000, education

□ This symbol represents the time of day during the House proceedings, e.g., □ 1407 is 2:07 p.m.

Matter set in this typeface indicates words inserted or appended, rather than spoken, by a Member of the House on the floor.



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costs are up more than \$1,200, and energy costs are up 40 percent. Despite the Republican rhetoric, their actual record is clear. Why should Americans expect anything different from them in the future?

THE WAR ON TERROR, CONTINUED

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 20, 2004, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. STEARNS) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. STEARNS. I would say to my colleague that the misery index, inflation and unemployment, when added together is the lowest it has been in the last series of Presidents, even going back to Jimmy Carter. So I think the Bush administration is doing a good job.

But this morning, Mr. Speaker, I am observing the third anniversary of 9/11. This is the third year since Islamic terrorists hijacked four passenger planes and killed 3,000 innocent Americans. We all know that. We will never forget those who perished on that day and our prayers are forever with them and their families. In the 3 years since September 11, we have overthrown terrorist-friendly regimes in Afghanistan and Iraq, we have killed thousands of terrorists, frozen their assets, dismantled potential weapons of mass destruction and coordinated a worldwide war on terror. We will never forget the sacrifices made by our military men and women and their families in this war on terror.

Yet despite our successes, Mr. Speaker, we still face a mortal danger. The world was reminded of the threat posed by Islamic terrorists when 90 people were killed in two simultaneous plane crashes that are suspected to have been blown up by Chechen bombers. And just a week after these planes crashed, Chechen thugs took over a Russian school and killed over 300 Russians. Nearly half of the 340 dead were children. These terrorists kept hundreds of children, along with parents who were bringing them in for their first day of school, in a sweltering gymnasium where the heat was unbearable. To make matters worse, these terrorists refused to allow deliveries of food and water. For 3 days they did not let these innocent people use the bathroom. For 3 days they threatened them constantly with death. Mr. Speaker, they made good on their promise.

We must ask ourselves, what kind of depraved animal attacks innocent women and children, holds them hostage and treats them with complete contempt as human beings? We learned 3 years ago that these terrorists are perfectly willing to kill women and children.

A recent article in Atlantic Monthly revealed that certain Muslim clerics and al Qaeda justify the murder of defenseless women and children in their worldwide jihad. The same article also reported that al Qaeda wants to kill 4

million Americans. This is what we are dealing with, a ruthless, remorseless force that will stop at nothing to accomplish their final end, the death of the West. This is yet another example of these Muslim terrorists using bloodshed to influence elections.

A survivor of the Russian terror told a newspaper that she asked the militants why the captives were taken. They replied, "Because you vote for your Putin." Another freed hostage said a terrorist told her, "If Putin doesn't withdraw forces from Chechnya and doesn't free our arrested brothers, we'll blow everything up."

A few months ago, al Qaeda bombed a Spanish train in the hopes of overthrowing the pro-American government. They accomplished their goal. Somehow I doubt the Russian people will react in the same way. They are in mourning, but all indications are that they will rise to fight this terror with resolve and determination. President Putin admitted to the Russian people that he has been weak against the threat of terror. Russia has been dealing with Chechen terrorism for nearly a decade. Yet the recent school murders may have finally served as a wakeup call.

President Bush extended his deepest sympathy to the Russian people and we do as well. Now we welcome the Russian government to our international fight against these terrorists.

Mr. Speaker, a couple of months ago, President Putin revealed that Russian intelligence services learned that Saddam Hussein while he was in power was planning attacks on American interests abroad and on America itself. This information still did not persuade the Russian leadership to fully support our international war on terror, but now President Putin and the Russian people understand what is finally at stake.

Some nations and politicians have been reluctant to join us in our war on terror, but no one is safe from these terrorists. Their faith is uncompromising and their violence is unreasoning. They proudly proclaim that they love death. Mr. Speaker, if we have learned anything from the lessons of September 11 and 3 years of our war on terror, it is this, we must kill them where they are before they reach our shores. And if they are so willing to die for their twisted cause, then we must be willing to accommodate them.

NEW OVERTIME RULES THREATEN PAY CUT TO MIDDLE CLASS FAMILIES

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 20, 2004, the gentleman from California (Mr. GEORGE MILLER) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to draw attention to an impending pay cut to middle class families. As my colleagues here in the Congress know, the House

voted last week on a bipartisan basis to stop a new policy that President Bush has put in place to change the definition of who qualifies for overtime pay.

For years it has been clear that in certain types of work you would earn time and a half pay for every additional hour you work if it is more than 40 hours in 1 week.

Overtime pay is not a minor thing to these families. It often accounts for more than 25 percent of middle class families' paychecks.

It helps foremen, assistant managers, journalists, registered nurses, and workers who perform relatively small amounts of supervisory or administrative work. It helps salespeople who perform some amount of work outside the office, chefs, nursery school teachers, workers in the financial services industry, insurance claim adjusters, funeral directors and embalmers, law enforcement officers, athletic trainers and many others from all different parts of the workforce.

But the Bush administration has changed all of that and 6 million middle class families are now at risk of losing their overtime pay.

Democrats in Congress have been leading the fight to stop the President and to stop the pay cut, but the leaders in Congress and the White House are doing everything in their power to see that we do not win.

The whole issue is a very curious thing.

The President looked out at our economy, at the mounting job losses, at the declining real wages and the rising costs of health care and college tuition, and he saw trouble. He believed that the threat to the middle classes was that they were earning too much overtime pay, and he ordered the Department of Labor to devise a scheme that would allow employers to force their employees to work the overtime hours but not receive the overtime pay.

It was not a popular plan. The Department of Labor received tens of thousands of comments from the public opposing it. Lawmakers received calls and letters and e-mails from our constituents opposing the plan. In fact, the department had to revise its proposed changes to try and, quote, make it fairer. Their first plan would have taken overtime pay away from 8 million families. This plan takes it away from 6 million. It still is not fair and it is not the answer to what ails our economy.

But even though the plan was unpopular, the President knew he could count on his friends in Congress to withstand the public opposition.

Late last year, the Senate, in a bipartisan vote, voted to stop the President's plan, and the House cast a procedural vote to support the Senate's provision. But when the final bill made it out of Congress and went to the President, the Republican leadership in the House and the Senate had stripped the bill of the amendment that would have blocked the President's overtime pay cut.